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Future techies scale 100ft wall

& learn 'ethical hacking'



The students take part in white water rafting on the Teesta, which flows past SMIT.
A Telegraph picture

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Majitar (East Sikkim), Jan. 7: Alka Singh looked thrilled as she set foot on terra firma after expertly sliding down an eight-storey-high vertical wall with the help of a rope. The amateur rappelling skills of the five-foot-nothing computer applications student from Rajiv Gandhi University in Itanagar were employed to encourage her batch-mates to take part in similar activities.

In all, 83 undergraduates — mostly engineering students but also a few doing their BCom — from different parts of the country are taking part in a unique course on network management and "ethical hacking". The pro-

gramme combines academics with white water rafting and training in mountain climbing conducted by instructors from the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling.

The 18-day course, organised by Nettech, a Bhubaneswar-based IT consultancy firm, is being held at Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology (SMIT) here.

For most of the students, it was the first time that they climbed up and down a 100ft vertical wall, crossed from the roof of one eight-storeyed building to another about 80ft away using a rope and pulley and drove up to 14,500ft to shake hands with Chinese soldiers at Nathu-la.

"It was very exciting," Alka said, all smiles and ready for another go at the wall. Three boys, however, needed a lot of persuasion to overcome their fear. But they, too, finally gave it a try.

"The amount of hands-on training that this course offers is quite good. No other course does this," said Ushashi Chakraborty, a fourth-year computer science student of Futures Institute of Engineering and Management, Calcutta.

Brig. S.N. Mishra, the director of SMIT, inaugurated the course on December 26. "Students from Noida, Manipal, Bhubaneswar, Durgapur and several other places are taking part," said Swapan Purkait, the founder-instruc-

tor of Nettech who started the course four years ago. The participants are selected on first come first served basis and are charged Rs 7,000 each.

Academics, too, were given a lot of importance.

"The training programme is designed to increase the participants' technical knowledge of Linux-based solutions," Purkait said.

An interesting facet of the course is knowledge about ethical hacking. "Computers around the world are systematically being victimised by rampant hacking, which is being executed so flawlessly that the attackers compromise the information system, damage the target data and then leave the network without any

trace," said Purkait, who studied BCom before shifting to network security.

To counter this, Nettech has designed a course on "ethical hacking", which allows participants to work on a simulated network with an internal set-up. "The students design their own networks and test, scan, hack and secure it from attackers. The goal of ethical hackers is to help their organisations take pre-emptive measures against malicious intrusions by attacking the system themselves, all the while staying within legal limits," the instructor added.

"It's an awesome course," said Rajiv Berlia of Siliguri who is now studying IT at Jadavpur University.